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ABSTRACT

This paper is a discussion of a Career Exploration Project jointly undertaken by the Seal of Ohio Girl Scout Council and the Division of Continuing Education of Columbus Technical Institute during the Summer of 1975. The participants were economically disadvantaged young women between the ages of 11 and 17. The main objective was to increase participants' awareness of self, others, career options, and educational alternatives, as well as the factors that go into a career decision. A variety of resources and programming ideas were used, including exploration of career areas represented at Columbus Tech and exposure to actual work settings. An outline of the program content is given in the paper, as well as a discussion of some of its highlights, problems and outcomes. (Author)

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NONTRADITIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

A CAREER EXPLORATION PROJECT FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

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In the summer of 1975 the Seal of Ohio Girl Scout Council was involved in programming for economically disadvantaged young women between the ages of 11 and 17. The prime responsibility for designing and implementing one of their four programs--a Career Exploration Project--was subcontracted to the Division of Continuing Education of Columbus Technical Institute, a public two-year, post-secondary educational institution in the State of Ohio. The following is primarily a description of this Career Exploration Project, with an attempt to relate some of what worked and what did not work for us.

I would first like to point out two important factors involved in this program. First is the "marriage" of the two organizations responsible for the program. As is indicated in the diagram (Figure 1), the Girl Scouts sub-contracted to CTI (broken line in diagram); however, the relationship between the two organizations continued to be a working one throughout the program, with each organization contributing to the final product--the program. It was a function of the coordinator to serve as a liaison between the two groups in order to efficiently make use of resources, solve problems, and so forth.

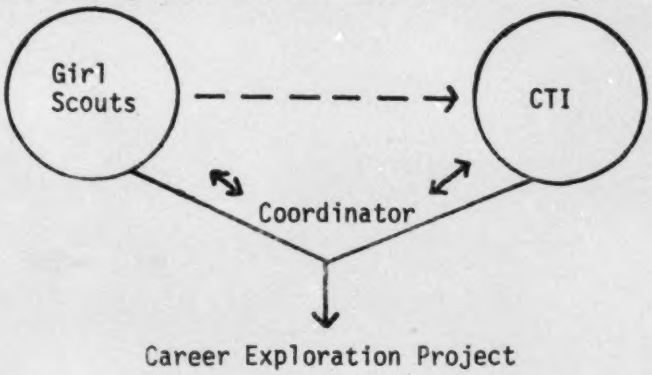

Figure 1

That one of the participating organizations in this venture was a public two-year, post-secondary educational institution is particularly noteworthy for several reasons:

- The campus provided a convenient location with ample space;
- CTI has a wealth of resources for career exploration, namely the many careers which are represented by its various departments;
- The program provided an opportunity for the institution to fulfill its community service function and help strengthen the college/community relationship. It was an important experience for the college and its students and staff, as well as for the young women participants;
- It seemed to be an exciting experience for the participants to be on a college campus;
- It gave the participants an important exposure to and hopefully affected their knowledge of and attitudes towards post-secondary education. It gave the participants additional input for their future decisions about careers and education. It also exposed them to students, faculty and staff.

Of course, the program was not without problems, such as behavior (by the young women) that was not appropriate to a college campus, but this location factor is nonetheless an important one.

Another important factor to keep in mind is the nature of the participants. The diagram (Figure 2) depicts three characteristics that we had to keep in mind. The participants were young, women, and economically disadvantaged; therefore, there had to be an attempt to take all three characteristics into consideration when programming.

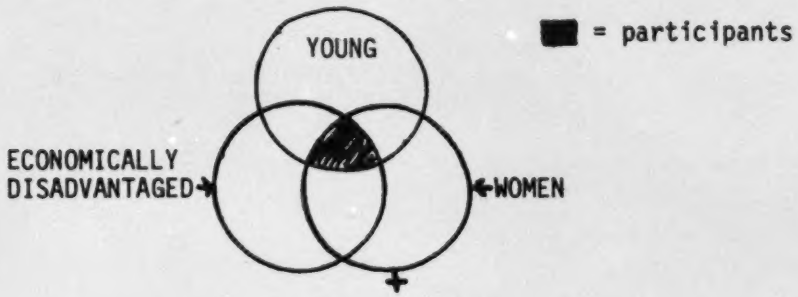

Figure 2

The bulk of the program was devoted to familiarizing the participants with factors related to a career decision. We had originally hoped for a

smaller age range (14-17); however, we ended up with 11-17 year old young women. This sometimes made programming difficult. In general, however, the younger members seemed to benefit from and enjoy the program as much as or more than the older group.

Program "staff", in addition to the coordinator, included Girl Scout staff (including social workers who serviced all four of the Girl Scout programs); faculty, staff and students of Columbus Tech; 2 facilitators responsible for some of the self-awareness/small group exercises; and community members. These included women and men, minority and white. We particularly tried to use women whenever possible. We had both paid and volunteer staff.

The program ran for 16 sessions held during July and August, usually two sessions per week. Most sessions involved both morning and afternoon activities, lasting until mid-afternoon. Figure 3 gives an informal, session-by-session outline of the program content. Further explanation of some segments will be given in the body of this paper.

On the first day we had the young women fill out cards that would entitle them to be registered students at Columbus Tech as members of our program. Later on in the summer they were given an opportunity to see their names on the computer, which was an exciting experience for them. We also gave them nametags and notebooks on this first day which could be used throughout the program. For the most part, these items "disappeared" as the program progressed. However, as with any program, the nametags were a handy tool in the initial stages; also, we had originally conceived the notebooks as something that the participants could use for school (hopefully they served this useful purpose).

We also gave the participants an information-gathering questionnaire for their completion, and tried to administer some "paper and pencil" instruments (such as an attitude scale) to assess "where they were" at the start of the

I	II	III	IV
a.m. registration questionnaire get to know one another attitude scale and Career Development Inventory completion (or non-completion) p.m. small group values clarification exercises and discussion Campus tour	a.m. movie "Looking at Tomorrow" talk and discussion–Vocational Psychologist Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory administration p.m. tower building exercise Vice President for Education, CTI, on education	a.m. World of Work–slides and talk by minority woman from local TV station modified "Will Marriage Turn you on for 50 years" exercise from Vocational Readiness Package p.m. tower building "award" Engineering Technologies (general) hands on drafting exercises	a.m. Public Service Technologies (general) movie, slides, visit from Fire Department (4 fire-fighting vehicles) p.m. collage making–women in jobs
V	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**
a.m. Health Technologies (general) primarily visits to labs a look through a microscope p.m. Strong-Campbell results and discussion with attempt to introduce career reference materials (Some who had not taken the SCII took it at this time.)	a.m. Business Technologies, including visit to Secretarial Lab, Food Service Lab, and Computer Center (saw names on computer) (general) p.m. modified exercises from Vocational Readiness Package–job application, "Wheel of Fortune"	a.m. Engineering Technologies (specific)–intended to be whole group together on drafting and architectural. Mix-up caused faculty "no-show"–coordinator had to improvise. Public Service Technologies (specific) Social Services–movie, role playing (woman student) Law Enforcement–discussion with minority woman student p.m. Send away for career information with $1.00 budget	a.m. Business Technologies (specific) Secretarial Science–including equipment and exercises Food Service Technology Group exercise–including sex role stereotyping p.m. Health Technologies (specific) Dental Laboratory–hands on exercise Nursing–various hands on experiences movie–"Decisions, Decisions"
IX	**X**	**XI**	**XII**
a.m. gues. (minority male)–discussion - including behavior on placements p.m. volleyball game (with some CTI students participating too) between "Day Shift" and "Night Shift" rest of afternoon devoted to having fun, with some business taken care of	a.m. field trip–State Highway Patrol Academy p.m. field trip–National Guard Armory	a.m. placements – e.g. & nursing home p.m. police retarded bank vet clinic Red Cross neighborhood center	a.m. placements–at same locations
XIII	**XIV**	**XV**	**XVI**
field trips newspaper radio station informal trip to State Office Tower with 40th floor view of city	worked on mural of "favorite things of program" and put together display for final reception talked about placements and other things (evaluation was one purpose) readministration of attitude scale (only a very few had taken it before)	behind the scenes tour of department store	reception for young women participants, relatives, friends, program guests, etc. Included campus tour, refreshments, certificate presentation, and two groups of participants role playing a "career" with the audience having to guess the career.

Figure 3 - Outline of Program, by Session

program. In general, there was a reaction against having to do so much "reading and writing." Some were unable to complete some of the items. (Remember, some of the participants were rather young, particularly for an instrument such as Donald Super's Career Development Inventory--one of the instruments we attempted to use. Reading achievement was probably another factor involved.) In the case of some of the other participants, I would question the validity of the responses, as some may have either not answered because they did not feel like doing so or may have answered randomly or incompletely for a similar reason.

The participants also took a while to warm up verbally; however, time seemed to take care of some of the shyness and rebelliousness that appeared at the first session. It is also interesting to note that during the initial part of the program, almost all of the participants expressed nursing as their career choice.

Our goal was to give the young women an "orientation" to career related factors. These are shown in the diagram (Figure 4): an orientation to career options including nontraditional careers for women, self-awareness, other-awareness, and educational options. We also tried to give them some idea of how these factors were related to each other and to a career decision.

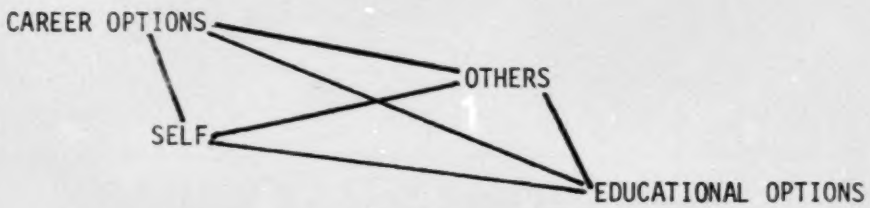

Figure 4

Self-awareness and other-awareness opportunities were presented both in-directly (through such things as appropriate and problem behavior and situations that arose because of such behavior, and a volleyball game), and directly

(through various discussions and exercises, including values clarification exercises). One particularly helpful and successful exercise was a "tower building" exercise adapted from a handbook of exercises edited by J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones. The young women were divided into three groups, given 10 fake $100 "bills", and asked to bid on construction paper with "values" (e.g. friendship, good job) written on them. This paper as well as other supplies were then used to build "towers". We also had a judging of the towers. This tower building exercise was particularly helpful as an ice-breaker and cohesiveness builder, and the participants seemed to enjoy it.

Educational options, too, were presented both directly and indirectly. Directly, we had a speaker on the topic and showed "Decisions, Decisions"--a comprehensive and useful movie discussing alternatives to the four year college. Indirectly, educational topics permeated other segments of the program where appropriate, and, as mentioned before, holding the bulk of the program on the campus of a post-secondary educational institution was also a contributing factor. All this no doubt left the young women with a greater awareness of education and training, and its relationship to "careers".

The main bulk of the program was devoted to the "career options" factor. Although the young women were not asked to arrive at a career decision by the end of the program, they were asked to make certain "choices" along the way--either in the various exercises or in deciding on a preference of careers to explore.

Included among the experiences for this part of the program were guest speakers who presented or discussed various information and issues. We also showed a movie--"Looking at Tomorrow"--which is an excellent film for young women; the movie emphasized both traditional and nontraditional careers for women. We tried a collage exercise (with magazines) on women in jobs, but this did not seem to work as well as we had hoped. We also used parts of the

Vocational Readiness Package--a program for young women available from the YWCA in Los Angeles. We had intended to modify it from the start, but found after trying some of it that further modification was necessary. Although the package seems to have much to offer, it's designers also make it clear that the program might not be as successful with a lower socioeconomic group (to qualify for our program the participants' families had to be on or eligible for public assistance). In addition, some of our participants might have been younger than the age group for which the Package was designed. The exercises primarily revolved around planning for a fictitious person, and it was felt after trying an exercise that, in general, this planning--particularly for a fictitious person--was not enjoyed by our participants as it might be by other groups. We did go on to use some other parts of the Package--although we did modify these. A job application exercise was one of the more useful. During this exercise there was an attempt to incorporate career reference materials as, for example, the young women would have to know the education required for a particular job for which they were applying. The exercise did not run as smoothly as would be hoped; again, age was no doubt one factor. However, I did think that it was interesting to note that a number of participants put down CTI in the "education" section of the application.

One of our most worthwhile and successful activities was the one in which the young women were given a $1.00 budget with which to send away for career information--thus even more actively involving them in the exploration of careers and making them aware of this means of obtaining information. The Vocational Guidance Quarterly was particularly helpful for gathering references with which to make lists from which the participants might choose. Materials from the government were among other sources used. The young women were asked to write their own letter (a model was given, although some participants improvised). This, too, was a learning experience as some were unfamiliar with

business letter writing.

A large segment of the Project was devoted to exploration of the career areas represented by the technologies at CTI (but not necessarily limited to the actual "careers" represented by these technology programs). The participants were given a general introduction to each of the four divisions, and then were given the opportunity to explore one of the technologies from each division further. Although some choice (decisions) on the part of the participants was called for, logistics considerations meant that a totally "free" choice was not always available to them when it came to satisfying their requests. Figure 5 is a model of this part of the program, with rectangles representing the four divisions and circles representing the technologies within divisions that were further explored. Within each division there was one technology which was requested by a large percentage of the participants, with a smaller number expressing a preference for another. For example, from the Business Technologies Division the majority chose to explore Secretarial Science, with a minority exploring Food Service. In general, both the division (general) and technology (specific) explorations involved a variety of experiences--such as talks, visits to laboratories, and hand-on experiences. Faculty, staff and students involved were cooperative, and creativity was seen in various experiences designed for our program participants.

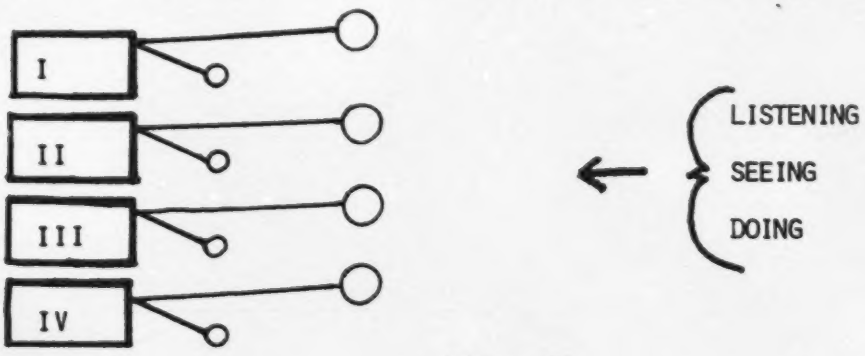

Figure 5

Another segment of the program was exposing the young women to actual work settings for part of two days. We called these "placements" although no pay was involved. The types of placements involved are listed in Figure 3. Age, participants choices, and other factors made certain types of employment settings more appropriate for our participants than other types. The participants were also able to see people at work during our various field trips--also listed in Figure 3.

With regards to evaluation...we had originally hoped to use the previously mentioned "paper and pencil" instruments for evaluation purposes. However, because of such factors as inappropriateness of the instruments (especially for the younger participants), lack of response, questionable validity of responses, and both participant attrition and addition after the first session, our original plans had to be changed--making our evaluation of the program more informal and subjective. As coordinator, I used a problem-behavior incident during the program to "sneak" in an "evaluation"--by asking the group if they would prefer that we called the program off. I interpreted any "no" responses as positive responses.

Towards the end of the program, preparation for the final reception took place. We had taken some photographs, and a display was made of these. Each participant present was also asked to add a section to a poster depicting the thing they liked best during the program. Most indicated their placements. One young woman found the Dental Laboratory to be her favorite. By doing this we found out a little about what the participants liked, although factors such as poor attendance at that session and the fact that the session followed soon after the placements (thus, perhaps influencing responses) may have made any conclusions drawn from the poster less worthwhile.

During this same session, I tried to play an "evaluation" game by giving the participants a letter of the alphabet and asking them to name as many

careers as they could--verbally, as a group. This was a verbal modification of a question on our initial questionnaire. Subjectively speaking, I do feel that the responses seemed to indicate awareness of different kinds of careers--probably more awareness than when they came to the program. Again, however, it is difficult to make a valid statement on this; trying such a verbal game at the beginning of the program might have made this exercise more informative.

Some of the staff also evaluated what we might have done differently, and I will now talk of some of these suggestions. Of course, evaluation tools other than paper and pencil ones was one suggested improvement. Others included a less spread out program; with a program running for a large part of the summer, we found that we lost members, we gained members after the beginning, and absence varied from session to session. Usually our session attendance did not go over 15-20 attending, with some ever lower than that; however, the total number of young women that were with us at one time or another exceeded 30. A more condensed program may have helped our attendance. We also found that there was a need for timing flexibility (e.g. some sessions taking less time than others). The days sometimes seemed too "long" for the participants. We were somewhat bound by grant requirements which made flexibility more difficult; however, as time went on, our flexibility increased.

More staff, as well as a better integration of the programming and social work components was also something that was suggested. In addition, of course, we also learned by our programming mistakes such as some of those previously mentioned. And, as was mentioned before, a narrower age range would probably make the programming task easier.

We sent out a questionnaire to employers who had provided our placement settings. Four were returned. For some the young age of some of the participants was an issue--some felt that older young women would have been more appropriate. For some age was not an issue; however, maturity or interest was. The need for preparation of the participants for what would happen at the place-

ments was mentioned by some (one setting had done this and found it worthwhile). Two felt that 2 days was a good amount; one felt that more time might have been more beneficial to them and to the participants; one felt time was not an issue if interest was there. Three said they would do it again, and one would not provide a placement setting without first talking with the young women to make sure of their interest and so forth.

I have heard of two after-the-fact situations that are a positive evaluation of the program: one is that one of our participants is still volunteering at her placement--the Red Cross; the other is that a mother had commented on the positive change in her daughter following the program. And lastly, during one of the role playing situations at the final reception, an audience member had guessed "mailman" as the career being depicted. During her response to this guess, one of our 11 year old participants/"actresses" gave what I considered to be a positive comment for the program when she said, "...besides, it's not mailman."